Unquenched, Unquenchable

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by PoisonChocolateCake

Summary

Will Graham had a hard time growing up, and that chip on his shoulder makes him one of the New Orleans PD's most determined rookies.One Doctor Lecter, brought in to consult on a series of blood-drained corpses turning up all over Louisiana, has taken a special interest in the young recruit.

If only the stubborn state Trooper Graham would return that interest.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The vampires of New Orleans have always been legendary. The ones dwelling in the swamps of rural Louisiana have mainly passed unacknowledged through their infinite nights.

Will had often been warned, not to venture too far into the woods or to wander too far downstream when he was out fishing. Stay on the dock, where it's safe. When he was a child it had been one of the only rules his father had attempted to enforce. But by the time he was a young man it was a warning that had reached the status of an urban legend, spread throughout all sorts of small Louisiana towns, buoyed by a collection of mutilated corpses that would wash up to shore and then be hushed up.

There's vampires in the swamps. They're meaner than gators. That old homeless man who always used to be going in the 7-11 dumpster ain't ever there anymore, is he?

But to Will, the woods and the swampy earth of the bayou were cool, dark and quiet, where his childhood home was filled with a suffocating heat and shouting. Shouting voices at first, then a shouting storm of emotions that hurt his head. So he stayed out in the woods for as long as he could, after school and most of the summer.

Once upon a time, his mother had taught Will to fish, to hook the wriggling bait on the line and sink it, while his father had steered their small boat under the reaching trees till they reached wide flat water, cursing the broke-down engine the whole way. That seemed like a lifetime ago, when they'd had more money - but still not much. When the silence and coldness between his parents hadn't grown louder and louder and made Will want to run out of the house as fast as he could on short legs. He would sit out at the end of their long dock in their long backyard that reached out into the waters. Casting a line off the dock wasn't the most bountiful way to fish, but his mother had praised him for his catches time after time.

"At least someone in this house can put food on the table," she'd sighed. "Oh never mind Will. Don't give me that look. Don't concern yourself. I just can't stand that busybody teacher of yours. Lord knows I can't repeat what your father said about her."

When Will had started Grade Two, he'd been enchanted with his tall blonde teacher from the city. She'd taken a liking to him, taking care to remind him to mop up his face after lunch or tie his shoelaces and spent extra time teaching him long division. Friday afternoon she'd noticed holes in the bottom of his sneakers and offered to drive him home. Will had accepted happily.

Will didn't like to think on the expression on his mother and father's faces after the tall blonde teacher had exchanged a few words with them. The wide eyes she'd cast around the messy kitchen, their broken screen door. The wreckers on the lawn his daddy needed for parts. Her abrupt departure.

The shouted words coming from his parent's bedroom that night hurt Will's head. All of that night and into early Saturday morning when Will stole down to the dock.

Will had returned to the house in the middle of the afternoon with a decent catch of fish. He'd thought that his mother and father would be pleased but his father just said with a tight mouth that his mother had gone to the store.

Will sat and waited on their porch, with it's peeling paint and broken screen door, eyes fixed on the end of the long, dirt gravel driveway, waited and waited for his mother to come back from the store. Until the sun went down, until the crickets chirped, until a chill settled into him even through the soupy southern heat and he knew that the fish he'd left out on the counter would be spoiled meat.

His mother wouldn't be coming back to cook them. This he knew with a certainty as real as the headaches he'd gotten from her shouted words. No matter - he'd - he'd just go back out and catch more fish.

Perhaps a certain numbness had overcome his senses.

It seemed as though he was watching himself unmoor their small boat from the back of their dock. Their house faced out onto the water that way, and Will did the lion's share of his fishing just off the dock. His mother had said he'd learn a feel for the water soon enough and that he'd be a fine sailor once he was old enough for a proper license. Now he knew she'd not cared to see it herself. It would be alright though. If he could find some fish then maybe his father's mouth would loosen and they could sit down, have a meal together, like a family.

He had to do something.

But the boat rocked a bit more than Will had anticipated when he set his small feet into it, and he decided to row the boat out instead of turning on the motor. No need to risk alerting his father with the loud sound of engines. His hands fumbled with the lures he'd fished out from the toolbox, even with the oars in their holders, and before he'd even realized he'd forgotten a fishing pole, Will realized he'd misjudged the currents and the small boat was even further out than he'd anticipated.

And he wasn't alone.

As sure as he knew his mother was gone, as sure as he knew his head was suddenly aching, he knew he wasn't alone. The moon was full and slicing through the moss that hung down from the tree branches and illuminated all sorts of movement through the patches of earth all through the bayou. Some small animals, peering out. The barest whisper of the wind. And a large predator hulking just out of sight. Will inhaled sharply and grasped his oars. He was desperate to get back to the dock, back to his bed. But he dared now show his fright in case he raised the predatory instincts of what was following him.

Whatever it was, Will was certain it was bigger than a gator.

Just as the thought popped into his head, a hysterical laugh escaped his lips. They'd warned him about the gators, they hadn't known about - and then before Will could even register the

movement out of the corner of his eye, it was upon him and a sharp pain lanced through his shoulder. Just as suddenly as it had attacked another bolt of movement tore the beast from him. He cried out and turned over.

The thing that had attacked him was foul smelling, gray tattered skin hanging from hollow cheeks and peering at him with cavernous dark eyes. It's filthy hair hung from a visage that had surely been human - at one point. It was now reaching towards him still, wailing with an inhuman hunger, but fended off by a figure that looked like - no that could not be his own mother -

Will reached up to his shoulder to feel the blood gushing out.

Still in shock, he raised his fingers in front of his face and stared at the blood in the moonlight. There was a lot of it. The two figures battling out in the swamp waters were drifting further away though, and Will realized he'd been caught in another current. Perhaps the state of shock he'd been blanketed by when he'd arrived at the waters was a blessing in disguise.

Despite his best efforts, he found himself drifting down into darkness.

When he woke up in the morning, he was saved from the morning light by the shadows of a tall tree. Blinking his eyes in confusion, he saw his father's terrified face, tears welling in his eyes. The boat had drifted into a muddy bank and stuck there, saving Will from being lost at sea, but not from the attentions of an awful - load of bloodsucking mosquitoes.

"I told you not to go out son! What's happened to you!"

Will's hand flew to his shoulder, and found unmarked skin there, although his shirt was filthy. He blinked in confusion once again.

"Did you have a nosebleed in the night? Son, I woke up to find you and your momma gone, I coulda lost my mind with worry…"

Worries poured out from his father's mouth in a cascade. Will flinched as he was patted down and examined. Not from any physical pain, but because why had his father known his mother hadn't taken him with her? He licked his lips.

"I saw momma in the swamp daddy."

The expression on his father's face was horrified. "Don't you say that."

"But I did! Something bit me and then -"

"Hush your mouth."

The tone of these words offered no room for argument. His father picked him up and carried him the long walk back to the house. Will sniffled back the tears that threatened to come and the two walked back to the house in silence. For the rest of the summer, their house was filled with silence, punctuated by an occasional cascade of worries from his father. Always the whiskey loosening his tongue.

By the time the days got shorter and Will was dreading going back to school, the stream of worries from his father had taken an unexpected turn though.

"We're going to start over, just you and me."

The 'without your momma' part remained unspoken.

He spun a tale of how much better life would be once they were in a brand new town. He had a friend that had given him a tip on some work down in a boatyard a few towns over and they'd have it good there. They'd have a nice new house. Cleaner air, plenty to eat all the time. It soothed Will into forgetting about his nightmarish encounter. They way his mother had left them. The enthusiasm in his words was catching and Will believed it as they packed up their few belongings, as he watched the only home he'd ever known disappear in the rearview window of their station wagon, even as the sticky summer heat stuck his legs to the vinyl upholstery.

But of course their new beginning didn't last long.

Will new teacher in Grade Three was short and peered at him suspiciously through her thick glasses. She had clapped a hand over her mouth in shock when Will had drawn a picture of what he wanted to be when he grew up - a police officer, catching bad guys like he'd seen on the news.

"I'm going to catch bad guys, like the bad guys in the swamp, like I saw on the news," he explained to his teacher. He proudly showed her the picture of himself as an adult, fearlessly investigating a crime scene to catch bad guys. "I'm going to be a police detective."

Instead of congratulating him on his ambition to become a detective, his teacher's face turned pale and then bright red and she hustled him off to the principal's office.

"Not natural," she'd decreed, waving the drawing at the principal. "Not right in the head - listen just suspend him in-school for now. Till we get ahold of his father. Violent. Tendencies."

These last two words were punctuated with a finger stabbing itself through the air.

But they hadn't been able to get ahold of his father that day or all week and Will had never been able to sufficiently explain the details he'd divined in his drawing about the string of murders happening up and down the Louisiana coast. Details that had appeared in his drawing of what he wanted to be when he grew up. He supposed he had used a bit too much of the red crayon when he'd started drawing the crime scene that had been discussed on the evening news but once he had started it had felt like he couldn't stop.

The teacher decided to drive him home, much to Will's dread.

When the teacher with the thick spectacles had arrived at their house, she sighed noisily when she spotted the broken boards on their porch, the rip in their screen door, the empties Will's father flung onto the front lawn.

"Explains enough," she'd grunted. "I wonder if your father is fit to speak with -"

"Get out," snapped the elder Graham. He snatched Will inside and sneered at the teacher. Will cringed - even from here he could smell that his father had started in on his after-work drinks with more enthusiasm than usual. "Don't come back, you hear me?"

In a few weeks, Will's father decided they needed to move again. This time, the fresh start would be much better. Will just needed to make sure he kept his oddness to himself at school from now on. Squaring his jaw, Will nodded.

But the next town just felt like another extension of the last.

In time Will's father just drank more whiskey to shout at the specter of his wife's shadow. His father had an unquenchable thirst for whiskey no matter the season. Will hated the stink of it, the way it made his brow sweat, the way it stopped him from measuring his words when he went to shout at his wife or her memory.

Will made good on his intention to catch bad guys though. He'd somehow kept his grades up enough to be accepted into the police academy in the city, by the time high school was ended. His father, senses beyond pickled by now, had acknowledged his son's departure from their latest family home with barely a nod.

With a sigh, Will picked up his rucksack, and walked slowly out to the bus station. It was going to be a long walk to the greyhound bus, so he may as well pace himself and leave early. His father would be needing their rusty old station wagon, and wasn't much for goodbyes.

Maybe this was really it.

This time, he was really going to make a new beginning.

There had been a series of gruesome murders lighting up the local headlines lately. People had been going missing only to be found later - missing all their blood and usually several organs as well. If Will could be the first at the police academy to crack this case - and he knew he could sure as he knew there were gators in the swamp - then this could finally be a new beginning for Will Graham.

Chapter End Notes

Title is from Lord Byron, of course.

Vampires - so nice I had to write about them twice.

Don't worry, there will be Hannibal (and a plot) soon!

My impressions of the South are mainly second hand from an old roommate, barring a few months I spend around Florida. If I have horribly butchered much please let me

know so I can fix it.

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Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Profligate European son Hannibal Lecter. Known for his lavish parties and his decadent tastes. His parents despaired of him, his sister gently scolded him, but when they died, he soon followed, crippled by grief. Once he'd avenged himself, he set about enjoying his un-death.

The signs of Hannibal's destiny were all there from the start. His was to be an unusual life. Even the midwife gave a start when she first laid eyes upon him. He had an unusually composed countenance for such a small babe, and didn't seem to want to cry when she smacked him and then swaddled him. By the time he could toddle about on two legs, even the lambs didn't want to go near him, much less the hounds. But hard times came to the Lecter estate, soon there were no more flocks or packs of animals. Soon there were far less servants than there had been. A cold winter arrived, freezing the Kingdom, and his parents soon disappeared. His efforts to protect his sister went to waste.

After Count Lecter took his revenge on those who had murdered his family, he ran his teeth over his brand new fangs and thought that perhaps this terrible hunger of his was satisfied at last.

In life he had been crippled by rage and a terrible need for vengeance that could never be sated. In un-death, he avenged himself swiftly on his sister's murderer's, leaving only one left alive. For seven generations, he'd often visit the vile pig's descendants just to give them a good scare.

After the seventh generation died out, he thought that perhaps at last his hunger was sated. He was free to explore and enjoy all that the world had to offer.

Until now.

Hannibal stared around the interior of his crumbling Italian villa and sighed.

The walls were becoming very damp. He had spent many wonderful years here, but there was no denying that the walls in this villa had become extraordinarily damp. It was unnacceptable. It would eventually damage his beloved art collection, which was of course, priceless. Though he truly cared for only a few pieces.

Perhaps it was time to move on.

It was also worth considering that he had perhaps started to attract too much attention to himself.

He would never consider himself solely a libertine - that would be poor taste indeed. But he had hoped against hope that perhaps a few elegant gatherings would attract a few more of his

kind. Or even, hoping against hope, that he could one day reproduce and start a small family of sorts. But his small gatherings had picked up enough steam to become large gatherings. It was no inconvenience - the villa was the perfect size for entertaining and had lacked no modern amenity when he had purchased it.

A small smile danced across Hannibal's face as he recalled faking his death while having the electric wiring installed in the 1920s. The expression on the electrician's face as he'd casually grasped a live wire had been priceless. He'd not gotten the chance to return and 'inherit' his property under the ever shifting identity of Count Lecter until forty years later. After that his parties had really started to pick up steam. Humans had swung their social mores towards a fun-loving attitude once more, but to Hannibal's dismay it seemed hollow.

Perhaps he'd found himself feeling a bit lonely.

He rose from where he'd lain to rest and started walking along the halls of his home. Elegant artworks lined the walls and evidence of a great deal of libertinism was strewn about. He'd hosted a gathering that had started out elegant, and soon dissolved into a raucous noisy affair. A man was even snoring into an 18th century chaise longue. Bottles were scattered about. For a brief moment, he regretted consuming his former housekeeper. But then again that had been in 1867. With a sigh, he exited the front doors and surveyed his lands. There were bodies strewn all about his home, and even the front yard in various states of insensible inebriation. Some would soon be home in their beds and some never would be home again. (Parties made him hungry.) Again, he realized that the gardens were dangerously close to disrepair. Another flash of regret hit him, for eating a perfectly good gardener while he was attempting to perfect his culinary skills. The regret caught flame when he realized that that had been in 1914.

It was definitely time to move on.

With new purpose invigorating him, Hannibal strode towards his kitchen. He'd always been curious about anatomy. Science had taken incredible leaps and bounds since he'd eaten his midwife ever so long ago. Perhaps he'd choose a new vocation, as a modern doctor.

He chose a good university, faked his identity papers, and moved on. It was fascinating, earning the medical titles - surgeon, psychiatrist even. But the snow in Baltimore - it reminded him of his human life.

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Hannibal stared around the interior of his new home and sighed.

It would entail a great deal of effort to update this abode to suit his tastes. But it could be done.

He was newly arrived in New Orleans from Baltimore, where he had updated his credentials as a medical doctor. The snowy winters there had bothered old aches and pains for him though, so he'd decided to set up a practice somewhere else. Somewhere warm.

A city where, rumor had it, he could easily find a great deal of companionship. With those of his similar station, or as modern thought would have it, condition. Hiding in plain sight was a wonderful tactic, after all. Adventuring around the city though, some doubt had set into his mind. He'd noticed only one creature he suspected to be of his own kind, and the bedraggled creature had been begging on a street corner, the stench of opioids strong on his undead flesh. Was that the fate of his kind now? To try to quench their thirst with something that could never satisfy? Such a creature could offer Hannibal no real companionship.

It was enough sorrow and disappointment to draw his fangs out of his gums and he nearly cut his tongue on them.

But it would do him no good to despair so easily, he chastised himself, walking through his new home and casting up visions of how he would re-decorate this new palace. Wherever he was, there was certainly always room for improvement. Surely some of the vampires of New Orleans would prove to be suitable companions.

Many long years passed.

Hannibal found himself growing bored and antsy. He started playing with his food even more often than he had reason to do so, strictly speaking. It wasn't his fault. He had to entertain himself somehow, and the lavish dinner parties he'd pictured himself hosting with those of his own kind were instead lavish dinner parties with mere humans. There were constant hints of other vampires in New Orleans, but Count Lecter despaired to find that they were often insensible on the many illicit substances that flowed freely through the modern city.

It left him feeling foolish that he'd hoped to find companionship so easily. Just by re-locating. Even if the city offered great entertainment. At first he had at first felt almost vulgar inserting himself into many of the more refined milieus. Only at first of course.

There was still something lacking.

If he had to be honest with himself, Hannibal was so bored he could die.

That is, if it weren't already too late for that.

It made him start to despair. And when he started to despair, his appetite increased. When his appetite increased, he inevitably drew too much attention to himself.

Just when he thought that his life in New Orleans had all been in vain. Just when he thought that he may as well take his risks packing his bags and heading back to Florence. One November night, he heard a knock at his door when he wasn't expecting any visitors. The knocking was insistent and Hannibal frowned. Surely this wasn't due to the noise he had caused during his Halloween party?

The screams, he had assured one frazzled guest, were all mere sound effects.

Still, the knocking at his door was far too abrasive, and Hannibal had resolved to make a meal of this intruder post-haste as he flung open the door.

That plan was rapidly altered by the sight that greeted him.

He inhaled deeply and yes- yes - oh at last it was true it was happening.

While he had fully expected that there might be a police presence at his home in due time, he had despaired of ever finding one of his own kind. At last - another vampire! And such a pure, resplendent one at that. He never expected that another vampire would deliver himself right to Hannibal's doorstep. Now this gorgeous creature appeared, smelling as fresh as the day is long and blinking at him from magnificent blue eyes - blue eyes that matched his police uniform.

Oh, the possibilities. What a cunning boy. What a brilliant disguise.

"Come in," he greeted. "Do make yourself at home."

Will stared.

The man who had answered the door seemed to be remarkably well-preserved for his age, if the rumors about this European dandy were true. And judging by the overflowing garbage cans and recycling bins he'd noted at the end of the drive, the rumors of elegant dinners followed by wild parties at this ostentatious mansion were one hundred percent true. He'd tried to conceal a sneer at the manor - but it was difficult. His partner Dave had insisted on whispering excitedly about the fortune that the Bentley parked in the drive had cost - Will had curled his lip at the waste.

His daddy had gotten pulled over the other day for trying to drive their old station wagon with just taped up cardboard covering where the rear passenger side door had been. He'd kicked up a fuss at the arresting officer and long story short, now Will owed his Sarge about a million hours of overtime.

Some people had everything and didn't even know it.

What's more the man who had riled all his neighbors in this conservative old neighborhood didn't even have the decency to look abashed at attracting the attentions of two of the greenest rookies in the New Orleans police department. He glanced over at Dave and then back at the man, who despite being independently wealthy, apparently didn't own a shirt to wear when answering the door -

-without knowing why, Will felt himself start to flush.

"We'll just discuss this right here if that's alright," interjected Dave. "There've been quite a few noise complaints. I'm sure you're well aware. Just consider this a friendly warning to keep it down. Wouldn't want to have to come back here."

While he was speaking, Will found himself being pinned by the gaze of the tall blonde man and quite unable to look away. There was something searching in his gaze, and though Will found it unsettling, knew it was wrong - wrong procedure probably - he couldn't look away.

Once Dave had finished speaking, he tore his eyes away and looked down at the man's bare feet. Gave a sharp nod and turned to leave. Only to find that the man had reached out and was touching the back of his hand with his fingertips. A jolt shocked through him, like electricity. He turned around, a stern word on the tip of his tongue.

"Surely you're not leaving already?" the man said in a plaintive tone. "I've only just found you. Come in."

Here his lips curved in a smile that Will found himself unable to categorize.

"Come in. Have a drink. There's plenty of … wine. To share."

"We're on duty sir," barked Dave. "No can do. Got to head out now."

"Oh. Of course."

Dave was being given a hard look, that soon turned into a baleful one at Will.

"But I must see you again."

At this declaration Dave started to cough into his fist and Will startled, snatched his hand away from the other man. Without saying a word, he lifted his chin high and strode back down the drive back to their squad car, trying to pay no mind to Dave's cackling about the scene they'd just departed.

He only glanced back once, and found that the man was still hanging in the doorway, staring after Will with round eyes.

Ridiculous.

Absurd.

Will swallowed.

He did his best to ignore Dave's running commentary on the man's "intentions". His partner was wheezing for breath after the effort expended on not laughing too loudly.

There was an empty whiskey bottle hanging out of the overstuffed recycling bin at a precarious angle. It brought him back to the stench of his own home growing up, that their dirty unkempt yard was so different than the manicured lawn of this mansion. Even if they were both occasionally littered with empty liquor bottles. Will swallowed hard. An anxiety he couldn't name swelled up in him.

"Will? Will you know I'm just busting your balls right?"

Blinking owlishly, Will tore himself away from thoughts of the past and blinked up over at Dave, who was settling into their cruiser. Will pressed down on the gas and tore out of the driveway.

"Right," he answered vaguely. "Odd man."

Dave bellowed with laughter at last, and Will relaxed slightly to think that the odd encounter was over and done with.

But that was not to be the case.

Chapter End Notes

Whew that felt fast. Poor lonely Hannibal.

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Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There were some cases that required special consultants.

This was definitely one of those cases.

While it wasn't necessarily very alarming for a body to wash up on the banks of the Mississippi River, as accidents do happen, the police station had been in a concerned buzz the day after Will had discovered …that *many* bodies. Dave had taken a day off. They'd been patrolling as usual, when Will had suddenly turned off from their usual route on a hunch, and Dave had howled in protest - their shift was almost over, didn't Will ever want to sleep - and then not said much else afterwards as they had gingerly exited their cruiser to begin taking stock of the blood soaked scene.

Something about it reminded Will intensely of a terrifying night from his childhood.

The night his mother had left.

Why he was afflicted with this moment of intuition, he didn't know.

He knew better than to say anything. To anyone.

Will knew he had come top of his class in forensics. Will had also come top of his class in psychology, focusing on criminal profiling. Will knew that he had impressed his teachers mightily. Will also knew that you couldn't just expect to come out on top, you had to earn respect with hard work and dedication. That didn't mean he wasn't itching at the seams to tell off whatever 'special consultant' had come in to poke around his crime scene and come up with some harebrained theory that would make no sense -

"-this display is ghoulish. The killer sees himself as otherworldly."

He froze.

There in the broad daylight at the front door of the New Orleans police station was the same tall blonde man who had so failed to impress him after logging a ridiculous amount of noise complaints. Dave had cackled that Will must be really something to finally get the man to be quiet - the complaints had taken a sharp downturn recently - but Will realized that his mouth was probably hanging open in a very vulgar manner and he snapped it shut.

"Hello Will," greeted the man. "I understand it was you who discovered the scene. My sympathies."

Will's eyes widened.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded. "Dave, why is he here?"

His partner cleared his throat, uncomfortable.

"Will, pleased to introduce you to Dr. Hannibal Lecter - forgive me if I can't recall is that M.D. or Ph.D. - Hannibal this is Will, one of our brightest. He's here to consult on our crime scene."

Once again, Will found himself pinned under an undefinable look from this *Hannibal.*

"Why?" he demanded. "We have plenty of leads. Why him?"

That was a slight exaggeration, and Doctor Lecter responded by lifting one eyebrow.

"Forgive me Will, but I do believe you must have been a child when this killer began operating in the state of Louisiana."

Will seethed.

"The psychiatrist who usually consults with officers in this detachment also found himself suddenly needed elsewhere," added the Doctor. "I am here on a consulting basis only."

Even worse!

Dave was watching. Dave was unamused, from the top of his shiny bald head to the tips of his shiny polished uniform shoes. That was the reason Will restrained himself from telling off this harebrained 'consultant' - how could he have even managed to show up at 8 in the morning Will thought to himself petulantly, with as much 'celebrating' as he evidently indulged in - that was the only reason.

"I'll be at my desk," he said curtly. "Getting a coffee first, before the briefing."

Dave nodded slowly. But to his dismay, Will didn't escape from this interloper in the police station so easily.

"That sounds wonderful, allow me to join you," declared Doctor Lecter. And with that he followed the younger man through the front doors, right into the police station's elevator.

Will tried to keep his eyes glued on his shoes. He didn't need to hear any more nonsense from Dave about just why the older man was paying him so much attention. To his shock though, Doctor Lecter reached out and pressed the stop button on the elevator.

"Hey!" protested Will. "What are you doing that for?"

"You can't know how long I have longed to find another one of our kind," sighed Doctor Lecter. He leaned in uncomfortably close and whispered in Will's ear. "Please, though young, you must know of the endless solitude -"

"You stop that now!"

Will pressed himself away from the Doctor, back up against the elevator's walls.

"I’m not - I'm not - that's inappropriate Sir! I'm working!"

Frozen where he stood, the Doctor's eyes widened.

"So you can just stay over there," he continued firmly. "No offense intended."

The doctor stared, uncomprehending. A long moment passed.

"Is it possible you don't know," he whispered aloud. "You have not yet realized. One so young as yourself -"

"I don't appreciate that!" exclaimed Will hotly. "I'm 22 and counting and - and I'm trying to work!"

"Of course," exhaled the doctor. "Forgive me."

The esteemed medical expert visibly drew himself together then, and Will shuddered to think that someone might have been watching their exchange on the security cameras. After the fact, he felt a blush creeping down his neck. He kept his eyes glued to his shoes. It wasn't true, he admitted to himself. He'd long had a small amount of wonder that perhaps - perhaps he really was like that. With men. It had seemed too big of a burden to bear when everyone in any new town he rolled up into thought he was odd and wrong in the head within five minutes of meeting him anyhow - and that was before they ever caught a whiff of his daddy.

But that was none of the doctor's business, he reminded himself sternly. Will had to focus on his work.

The doctor shadowed him, as promised, over to the cafeteria.

His gaze, cooler now, remained on Will as they got styrofoam cups and filled them with dark liquid. The taller man tried to offer a sleek black credit card to the cashier when they went to pay, and Will's eyes widened. He pointed wordlessly at a sign that said 'cash only' and handed over a few crumpled dollar bills.

"Thank you," murmured the doctor quietly. "Much appreciated."

Will felt guilty for a moment that this man was actually so easily tamed. It was a short moment though, as the two settled down at a small table by the window.

"Have you reviewed many of the cold case files? I suspect there may be quite a few related to this murder."

Will's eyes widened.

"I wanted to, but we're still waiting on having them dug up out of storage -"

His voice alarmed him, eager as it was. He leaned forward.

"And the missing persons too," he added. "I know that's a lot but there's got to be a pattern we aren't seeing. This might go back further than we think."

Doctor Lecter nodded, tapping his fingernails along the rim of his coffee cup.

"Are there any known drug users in the vicinity with violent impulses? One who may have come to see himself as otherworldly?"

Will startled a bit. He took a long sip of coffee, the better to assess Doctor Lecter from under his eyelashes.

"Not one that comes to mind immediately," he admitted. "Where did you get this impression of otherworldliness Doctor?"

"The wound patterns," sighed the Doctor. "It was unmistakable."

True! Will sat up straighter in his chair.

"I saw it too," he agreed. "The killer is losing control. It's been ages that he's staked out this territory and we've never noticed him until now. He was content to stay in the shadows, barely feeding, but something rattled his cage. He's afraid of something bigger than him closing in on his territory and it's making him sloppy because he's terrified."

Doctor Lecter tilted his head to the side.

"A stunning insight Will," he said softly. "Perhaps in another life you would have been a seer of sorts."

Will flushed and looked down.

"We only have this life, Doctor."

The Doctor inhaled sharply then, and Will looked up, concerned. Vividly, he remembered showing his drawings to his Grade Three teacher and finding himself in in-school suspension. Had he frightened the Doctor away already?

But he was just being observed, with a contemplative expression.

"So it would seem."

The two stayed in the cafeteria a bit longer, discussing the case and possible suspects. Even in his Criminology courses, Will almost forgot that time was passing, until a shadow loomed over them.

"Time to head over to the briefing Graham," greeted Dave. "Not like you to be only on time."

"Right!" exclaimed Will. He jumped up, and looked over at Doctor Lecter. "I'll see you around."

For some reason Dave started up coughing again and when Will looked over his shoulder. He resolved not to pay any attention to that either, and strode off to the meeting room. To his dismay though, Dave fixed him with an earnest look in the elevator.

"Graham," he said in an unusually serious tone. "I know it's none of my business - not like I'm even asking - but that Doctor character is a lot older than you."

"What?" asked Will. "I can tell that."

Dave sighed.

"I suppose you could do much worse," he replied. "At least he's a doctor."

Will found himself starting to flush furiously again.

"Never mind though! It's none of my business! Just - I'd just - I mean my nephew wound up awful sad after falling in with an older fellow and he's not himself sometimes still - but I think you've got sense. You've got sense, right Graham?"

Will stared at his feet.

"Good to know," concluded Dave. "Don't go talking my ear off Graham. Now let's start taking bets on who falls asleep first during this meeting."

Despite himself, Will found his thoughts straying back to the Doctor a few times during the meeting. And a few times again. Then during the end of the week he was staring into a cold cup of coffee, trying to pile through the mounds of paperwork on his desk when a shadow fell over him. He blinked a few times and looked up, exhausted.

"The archival system in this city is an utter abomination," Doctor Lecter informed him. "Fortunately I am resourceful."

He held out a cream manila folder and Will's eyes widened.

"There are newspaper clippings in this folder dating back to the last century, detailing unusual disappearances," continued the Doctor. "While I am sure they are no match for the diligent record-keeping of this department, they may yet have some insight. Perhaps you could join me in the cafeteria to peruse them."

Will found a smile stealing across his face.

"That would be nice," he agreed. "Just hold on a moment - oh there's Dave."

He waved at his partner across the room, and nodded his head towards Doctor Lecter before trotting eagerly to the elevator. A coffee break would be just the thing. He was already doing overtime and Hannibal - *Doctor Lecter* he scolded himself - was probably capable of finding a few useful clues.

An hour or so later, Will didn't even notice the heavy bags under his eyes as he spread out the clippings on the cafeteria table.

"This is incredible - thank you Doctor Lecter - "

"-Hannibal," interjected the older man. "Please."

"I do appreciate it," he continued softly. Without thinking, he reached out and covered the older man's hand with his own. "It's a real kindness, you talking with me like this. I know I'm not officially your case."

Hannibal tore his eyes away from Will's hand and stared back into his blue eyes.

"It's no hardship Will," he replied in a low voice. "Not for you."

Just then when of the other rookies walked by talking loudly, and Will jumped and pulled his hand away. He gathered up the contents of the manila folder and thanked Doctor Lecter again, more stiff and formal this time. Hannibal nodded, but cursed the recruits for startling Will, just when he'd made an overture of friendship. He vowed to return soon to the police station.

It was a good thing that secretary had so easily believed him that he required the schedules of the officers in order to coordinate their psychiatric appointments. Made it more convenient to drop by at the odd hours Will was working.

As for Will, he started to look forward to the times that Doctor Lecter would stop by his desk, rather than resent the interruption. An ease he'd rarely experienced was building into their interactions. He was beginning to feel something, that if he'd been pressed to name it would be a certain nebulous optimism, now that Doctor Lecter was paying him mind.

Until of course, the night he discovered the next crime scene.

Chapter End Notes

> There wasn't really a handy way to fit this in here, but guess what, I think Will just lied about his age, he's like 4 months away from 22 still. Naughty Will! It won't make that much difference to the REAL age difference here, haha.

Chapter 4

The flashing red and blue lights glared against the canopy of trees with a flickering light that only highlighted the depth of their shadows.

Will had been on another late night patrol, with another rookie cop. It had been a while since the incident with his father, but he still owed the Sarge an awful lot of overtime. No one wanted this late shift on a Friday. That's why they had been patrolling this out of the way neighborhood. One half way into the darkest woods.

For no reason in particular, Will had turned their cruiser down a side road that headed to the water. Soon enough they There were three figures locked in a struggle, illuminated briefly in the cruiser's headlights. They had scared off something that his partner had called a "foul smelling ghoul" before it was too late for the intended victims. Will had been injured, but was valiantly trying to ignore that fact.

For a brief moment Will had had a bright flash of memory, something reminding him of a time when he felt small and fragile. Like a child.

One of the victims was bleeding heavily, and Will rushed to provide first aid. But then of course, they'd found evidence that this was the foul creatures hunting ground. More victims. Less lucky ones. Scattered all through that dark corner of the forest.

It had been a long wait for back up.

Will sat, still dumbfounded, in the back of an ambulance as he watched blue uniforms come pouring into the yard. A manicured lawn gave way to swampier territory, leading down to a quick stream. The wooded area was composed of tall oaks, stretching their branches in a canopy hung with moss. Down in the middle of the trees the police were picking up people, sometimes picking up pieces of people. Corpses everywhere. Will took a deep shuddering inhale and almost howled as the wound in his shoulder twinged.

His partner had believed him that the bullet had glanced off of the flesh of his shoulder. That the ghoul had fired off a gun had surprised Will - though he supposed it shouldn't have. Blood had been pouring down his shirt, but he was doing his best to hide it from the paramedics. It had been a long time since he'd hurt himself, but as far as he could recall, he usually healed up much faster than anyone ever expected. Will was sure he'd be fine.

And he really, really, didn't want to leave the crime scene before he saw all the evidence processed properly.

He thought back to the cold case files he'd found, and the newspaper clippings Hannibal had brought him. There was a common thread of evidence not adding up and Will would be damned if he left this crime scene now. He sighed irritably, ignoring the paramedic's panicked noises in his ear.

"Please if I may. I am a medical Doctor."

Will's head shot up, and he was greeted with the sight of a very familiar Doctor. His mouth dropped open.

Will had thought that they had reached a tenuous sort of friendship but -

"What are you doing here," he demanded in a flat tone. "It's not safe."

The ghoul was out there in the swamp somewhere still. Will shuddered to think of the result of a confrontation in between the genteel doctor and whatever monster was responsible for these crimes.

Hannibal nodded dismissively at the paramedics, who rushed off, busy as ever. Will and the Doctor were left alone in the back of the ambulance.

"I own this land Will," answered the Doctor, giving his shoulder a rather severe frown. "I'm afraid I couldn't sleep through this racket."

Will stared.

"You've got more than one house?" he blurted out. "You never said."

They were on the outskirts of town. Hannibal's second property must be enormous - not that that mattered when it was all cordoned off as part of a crime scene.

"Show me your shoulder Will," replied Hannibal. "You're injured."

With a scowl, Will shrugged off the shock blanket.

"It's not as bad as it looks," he insisted. "I'll be fine."

To his shock, Hannibal began unbuttoning his shirt with practiced hands.

"You look as though you've lost quite a lot of blood Will," he chided. "Here let me just see this shoulder - ah."

Will froze. Why on earth had he allowed Hannibal to look at his shoulder? He'd frozen up and now the doctor would see-

When the ghoul had started firing at him, he'd frozen up. He'd had his gun out, ready to fire but hadn't been able to take the shot. The one round had torn through the flesh of his shoulder, until it had moved closer and then somehow - somehow he'd gotten closer to Will, inhaled, and then gone tearing off into the night. If anything had been different - it didn't bear thinking about.

And now Doctor Lecter, helpful, caring Doctor Lecter was going to take one look at his shoulder and know for certain now that there was something about Will that wasn't right -

Hannibal swallowed. Will's flesh was being exposed to him, pale in the moonlight. The thought blared into his consciousness that perhaps Will was untouched - perhaps no other had

had the opportunity to run their hands over his flesh - his hands nearly shook.

Tisking himself for straying from the task at hand, he ran his hands just above Will's skin and paused. There. That was the spot. The old scar, stretched out from growing pains but unmistakable. Where some unworthy ghoul of a vampire had bitten into his Will. Where Will should have been transformed into one like himself - but - but the transformation was incomplete.

"-your shoulder looks to be in good condition. But tell me Will, were you ever injured on your shoulder before."

Will dropped his eyes from the Doctor's analytical gaze.

"Perhaps as a small child?"

A short nod.

A confirmation of the evidence.

Hannibal dropped his hands away from Will's shoulders to examine his face.

Blue eyes were blinking, clearly exhausted. Though he had more of the healing power of their kind than perhaps he realized … an odd feeling in Hannibal's chest erupted. He would like to see Will far from here. See him well-rested in his summer house in Tuscany. See him lazily trailing a hand through warm Caribbean waters. Not trapped here, in this hellish landscape, surrounded by nothing but ugly human concerns.

"Will," began Hannibal, and then paused to watch a lab tech rush by carrying the remains of a human arm. Hannibal had thought it might be a bit of fun to purchase a home so near an inferior hunter's training ground but now … their surroundings were undesirable in the extreme. "Is there something you need? You could rest up at my house..."

Those wide blue eyes blinked up at him.

"No," he answered in a weary tone. "I'll just wait here - well I'm sure to have some business to attend to soon."

The rookie policeman was starting to sway with exhaustion.

"But a coffee would hit the spot," added Will in a wistful tone. The two men stared glumly as another tech in the woods let out a shout of dismay and three more uniformed officers went running over to another grisly discovery.

For a long time, the two men stared as the swamp was razed over in a flurry of activity. Though he knew he should be keeping a close eye on those working, something about the light kept catching Will's eye.

"I fear it shall be some time until my property shall re-gain any amount of privacy," remarked Hannibal in a mournful tone. "Tell me, when does your shift end Will?"

With a small sniff Will sighed. "I was meant to be done at 1am," he admitted. "But it doesn't feel right leaving before the scene is cleared."

With one raised eyebrow, Hannibal turned and stared at the first hints of pink that were beginning to peek over the horizon.

"I'm sure the fine officers here have obtained the lion's share of the evidence," said Hannibal gently. "Come up to the house. Allow me to make you a coffee if this is what you desire."

"Oh! Well, I -I couldn't impose Dr Lecter."

Will paused a moment, biting his lip. "Though if you could - maybe I do sorta need a ride back home," he admitted in a sheepish tone. "I let my partner take off in our cruiser just before midnight."

One of the paramedics rushed up to them, handed them Will's cell phone, and rushed off again.

Hannibal stared with open curiosity. Will's face had been serious throughout most of the evening - no doubt a product of his dreadful discovery and the fear of his rapid healing being discovered - but when he saw the ringing phone it crumpled for a brief moment. Instead of answering though, Will seemed content to let the caller go to voicemail. Mysterious indeed when the caller was clearly marked as 'Daddy' in his phone.

"Will?" he prodded. "Tell me, is everything alright? You seem rather concerned."

The young officer was still staring at his phone though, and when it lit up again with the same caller, he barely seemed surprised.

"I'm going to need a big cup of coffee," he sighed. "And I really hope Sarge is in a good mood for once. I have a feeling I'll be needing a few days off as well."

Will's gaze was downcast so Hannibal took advantage of the opportunity to examine him in the soft light of dawn. There were shadows under his eyes of course, but what bothered Hannibal was that his expression was morose where before it had borne a determined expression. It wasn't difficult to ascertain the source of his shift in mood, as Will was once again letting his cell go to voicemail. Bemused, Hannibal sat next to Will and kept an eye on the flashing screen of his phone. It was a long while until the icon flashed indicating another voice message had been left, and when it did, Will curled in on himself even more.

Hannibal flinched as the first strong ray of light broke over the horizon. Steeling himself, he dared to ask - "come up to the house Will."

To his surprise Will acquiesced with only a short nod. To his surprise, giddiness welled up in him at the though of having this young man to himself in his home, and Hannibal was relieved that Will was exchanging a few words with another officer before taking his leave. Hannibal settled for giving the officers a brief nod, before turning to walk back over the lawn towards his home.

The urge to settle a proprietary hand on the small of Will's back was strong but Hannibal tamped it down.

***

Hannibal sniffed at his coffeemaker with a smile.

He had led Will into one of his most comfortable drawing rooms. The officer had been insisting he would drink a cup of coffee and leave, but after Hannibal had bid him to take a seat on a plush sofa, he had nodded off rapidly. Hannibal had taken no small pleasure in covering him with a blanket in a shade of blue that showed him to his best advantage.

Walking back to the living room where Will waited, Hannibal let out a sigh of pleasure as he watched Will let out a loud snore and then press his face into the soft blankets. His curls were mussed on the pillows and a thin line of saliva was leaving a wet spot on one of his silk pillows.

It was beautiful.

It pained him to even consider that Will would soon leave his home.

He settled down at a table across from Will and pulled up a sketching application on his tablet.

***

Will was floating on a comfortable cloud.

His rest was usually half awake, always watching his telephone since he was on-call, or even worse, for calls from his Daddy. His father would phone him sometimes, at all hours of the night, just wanting to talk, slurring his words, at turns tearful or angry or on one occasion brimming with pride.

Will hadn't been surprised his father had been too drunk to make it to the graduation ceremony from his police academy. There was a small pebble of fury he had to swallow on those many disappointing occasions, but when the call had come, just after midnight, Will had had to blink back tears as his father slurred out that he was so so proud of his son. The voicemail that Will had tried to ignore at the crime scene, that he'd listened to in Hannibal's shiny chrome washroom before passing out on his couch - Will needed to return home immediately.

Why on earth he was thinking of that while on this comfortable cloud - oh.

Will reached out a hand to grasp for his phone and found himself flailing into empty space. He woke all the way with a start and blinked around in confusion before it sank in - he was in Hannibal's house. He must have fallen asleep there after leaving the crime scene - oh no.

Even a less perceptive person would have noticed that Hannibal was particular - Will cringed and wiped at his mouth, scratched his fingers through his hair. Despite the elegance of

Hannibal's home, something had set Will at ease enough to fall into a deep sleep. It tended to happen after he was injured.

But where was Hannibal now?

Blinking his eyes as he looked around, Will's heart sank even lower as he looked out a tall window and realized that the sun was high. What would Hannibal think of him?

He glanced around again. Where on earth was his phone?

"Will!"

Will jumped as he turned around to stare. Hannibal was just entering the room, with a look of concern.

"Are you feeling much better? I must confess I was somewhat worried you had taken ill."

Shaking his head, Will gave the doctor a sheepish grin.

Hannibal smiled warmly. "Are you in need of anything? Shall I prepare us some lunch?"

Will blinked with confusion and scrubbed at his eyes, hoping to conceal his blushing cheeks.

"No - no that's alright Hannibal. But thank you," he added hastily as the older man drooped visibly after Will declined his offer of food. "I really need to go - well it's a family thing so I've got to just go make sure -"

Will trailed off. He fidgeted a bit, not wanting to explain to Hannibal that he'd go find his father in the middle of another bender, and be helpless about the fact. Barely able to make sure the man was safe and put to rights before departing back to his own life again.

"…Dad broke his thumb repairing a boat motor and he's real mad about it," offered Will. Foolproof explanation. "I'd best stop by and make sure everything's good before he gets too wound up."

There. That should do it.

Hannibal gave him a small nod.

"I do understand your concern," he replied. "Come with me to the kitchen for now? I do hope you aren't in a terrible rush."

Will nodded and padded after him, still blinking a bit as he took in his surroundings. How long had he been asleep for? The crime scene had drained him ferociously, so he hadn't taken in much of his surroundings when he'd meekly followed Hannibal up to his home. The air of grandeur was expected, but there was also a certain rich darkness to the décor - a few idiosyncrasies that piqued Will's curiosity.

He leaned against the kitchen door and watched Hannibal assemble a few sandwiches and a thermos of tea. Fair enough.

"I really should be going soon," sighed Will. He looked around the kitchen with regret. "Daddy will be wondering where I am. Do you cook much?"

Hannibal smiled over his shoulder at Will. "As often as possible," he replied. "Though come to the car now - I mustn't keep your father waiting. Where is it that your father lives?"

"It's - it's a bit outside Lake Charles," said Will vaguely. "You wouldn't know it."

It was the middle of nowhere is what it was, but Will found himself once again reluctant to explain to Hannibal just how far down a winding dirt road his father had landed.

"That's no small distance," replied Hannibal. "Come along now - mustn't waste time."

Blinking, Will followed after Hannibal. He sat obediently in the leather seat after Hannibal opened the car door for him.

"I don't live too far from the station," he yawned. "You can just drop me off outside."

But he drifted off into sleep again, and didn't hear Hannibal's reply.

Exhausted as he was, he didn't awaken until they were pulling off the highway, just outside Lake Charles.

End Notes

Title is from Lord Byron, of course.

Vampires - so nice I had to write about them twice.

Don't worry, there will be Hannibal (and a plot) soon!

My impressions of the South are mainly second hand from an old roommate, barring a few months I spend around Florida. If I have horribly butchered much please let me know so I can fix it.

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